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NO GOD ON THE HORIZON?

VOEGELIN, BUBER AND BONHOEFFER
AND THE MOMENT OF SURRENDER

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In a time when the faith and freedom of men and women in Europe are challenged by radical atheism¹ and by the fanaticism of secularists, religious extremists and political fundamentalists, public discourse reconsiders the possibility that there is simply “no God on the horizon.” As Europe is becoming increasingly secular, the moral underpinnings of our Judeo-Christian heritage are shaken, i.e. the constructive elements in Christianity and Judaism which promote peaceful coexistence and tolerance.

Today’s racism, intolerance and abhorrence that exist in Europe between different cultural, religious and ethnic groups are alarming. The anti-Christian sentiment, the mounting anti-Semitism and the sweeping statements about “islamization” the so called “negative presence” of Islam in Europe is upsetting public discourse. The three monotheistic religions suffer currently from incitement to hatred, due to a clash of cultures and to the global rise of religious and political fundamentalism,² whether in the Middle East, Middle America or in Europe. Judaism, Christianity and Islam and its symbols are recurrently satirized, ridiculed and abused.

It seems imperative in the present circumstances not to be carried away by the mixture of secular and atheistic opinions or by the various political ideologies that dominate the public sphere and the media. The increased global interest in religion as well as its rejection, and the political and economical situation in the West, particular the late developments in Europe and the religious-political commotion in my native country the Netherlands, may need a deeper spiritual understanding which could clarify the underlying current of today’s cultural malaise.

What Europe faces, is a critical moment regarding the flood of ideological and religious language in the evolution of the place of

God in society—be it the experience-symbolization of “YHWH,” “Jesus Christ,” or “Allah.” We will have to address the wider framework of uncertainties, fears and political unease about religion in the West. I hope to offer a more all-encompassing picture and understanding of the experience-symbolization of the divine presence, attending to a major gap in the scholarship on “coexistence” in the European context and on politics and policies of the EU.

What is called for is careful discernment (*noein*; *noesis*)³ and honest reflection⁴ on the misuse of ideological and religious language, and on the attitudes and complex influences which are capable of impelling the human will, i.e. the ones toward good, and the others toward evil.⁵ One of the problems is the lack of imaginative reenactment of divine reality, as “love” and “reason” are recurrently buckled and commercialized, and God is either declared “dead,” “non-existent,” “delusional,” or becomes strongly politicized.

Eric Voegelin (1901-1985), Martin Buber (1878-1965) and Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945)—two philosophers, the other a theologian—have challenged such grim “anti-God-sentiment.” One of the typical phenomena in the quest of these spiritually energetic thinkers is the event of breaking out of the dominant intellectual group in order to find the spiritual reality that has been lost. As representatives of true spiritual order they argue their case for surrender to transcendent reality. In the works of Buber and Bonhoeffer in particular, God is represented as the universal, essentially nonpolitical, vulnerable God who creates order in the soul and in society, moving the focus back to love, to an *I-Thou* relationship and “covenant.”

I.

Secularism rampant in Europe

The prevailing negative attitude and intolerance toward religious expression, predominantly traditional monotheistic religion, and mostly in the public sphere, are spreading. Culture, media and places of worship are saturated with hatred of religious and ethnic minority groups, of those who think differently. The experience of profound uncertainty (*aporein*), to feel at a loss how to proceed, is not uncommon these days. Unmistakable, there is a lack of wisdom (*alogos*) and a sweeping “fear” (“*angst*”)⁶ of Islam in Europe, which is disquieting. This anxiety finds expression in the wide-ranging opposition to the building of mosques, to officials wearing a headscarf and so on.

Unavoidable identity crises particularly among European Christians have risen to the surface after the result of the public inquiries conducted into the sexual abuse scandals in the Catholic Church. At length and in great detail cases of emotional, physical and sexual abuse of hundreds, if not thousands of children in various European countries over decades have been reported.⁷ On top of these serious offenses an economic crisis has contributed to an air of despondency and reserve not only towards religious institutions, but towards any minority group who could expediently be used as a scapegoat for the predicament of the recession.

Furthermore, the prevalent acceptance of the European Union's refusal to embrace specific reference to God or Christianity's influence on Europe's distinctive civilization in its first constitution has marked the religious crisis within the EU as far from being inconsequential.⁸ People seem to have forgotten that European history is not only a dynamic process, but also a spiritual one in which God is operating. Buber writes:

History is a dynamic process, and history means that one hour is never like the one that has gone before. God operates in history, and God is not a machine which, once it has been wound up, keeps on running until it wears out. He is a living God. He expresses his truth through his will, but his will is not a program. At this hour, God wills this or that for mankind, but he has endowed mankind with a will of its own, and even with sufficient power to carry it out. So, mankind can change its will from one hour to the next, and God, who is deeply concerned about mankind and its will and the possible changes it may undergo, can, when that will changes, change his plan for mankind. This means that historical reality could have been changed. One must rely on one's knowledge. One must go one's way and listen all over again.⁹

In various European countries, however, there are politicians and secular fundamentalists who refuse to listen and seek to do away with God and religion altogether, specifically with Islam and Judaism but also with the Christian—mainly Roman Catholic—influences in the public sphere. We've seen the ban on the wearing of visible religious symbols in French public schools in 2004,¹⁰ to the 2009 attempt of Belgium politicians for banning the Crucifix at the entrance of a cemetery—the avowal for an absolute separation between Church and State.¹¹ These restrictions on the freedom of religion and on its expression amount to the capitulation and appeasement of Europe to aggressive secularists, as well as to religious and political extremists.

The secularism rampant in Europe and its hostile self-alienation (*allotriosis*)¹² is such that the genuine actuality of experience of human coexistence, i.e. between the major religions and the acceptance of other cultures can only to be achieved if those with a moderate, reflective and more balanced religious and political conviction become sufficiently courageous to take up their responsibility and make their voices heard. Bonhoeffer in his work *Ethics* reminds us of the core Christian values, of the “surrender” of our actions to “grace” and “love.” He refers to “God” and “neighbor” as the origin of responsible action:

By recognizing that responsible action is limited both by surrendering our action to God’s grace and judgment, and by the responsibility of the neighbor, it simultaneously becomes apparent that precisely these limits qualify the action as responsible in the first place. For God and neighbor, as we encounter them in Jesus Christ, are not only the limits of responsible action, as we have already recognized, but they are also its origin. Irresponsible action is defined by its disregard for these limits of God and neighbor. Responsible action, on the other hand, gains its unity, and ultimately also its certainty, from this very limitation by God and neighbor. It is not its own lord and master, nor is it unbounded or frivolous. Instead, it is creaturely and humble. This is precisely why it can be sustained by an ultimate joy and confidence, knowing that in its origin, essence, and goal it is sheltered in Christ.¹³

To achieve some form of responsible action toward coexistence, the European countries have to agree that any religious consortium, be it Jews, Christians, Muslims or any other religious grouping living on the continent, must become integrated into a democratic society. If this fails, intensified disarray among the various groupings might sustain, which will have serious repercussions on the future of Europe and on the retention of religious freedom and expression in the West, thus, on the values, possibilities and challenges that it presents to us.

“Secularization” in Voegelin’s terms is the process by which the cosmos, which had once been seen as having a dimension of transcendence, comes to be interpreted as lacking any relation to transcendence, also referred to by Voegelin as “a polite word for deculturation.”¹⁴ Regrettably, Europe’s secularization is becoming notorious for denying its well-orderedness, its “good social order” (*eunomia*). In Voegelin’s use, specifically “the existence ordered morally and cognitively by the tension of existence toward the pole of

the transcendent perfection of being.”¹⁵ Religious and cultural heritage, Europe’s holy history (*historia sacra*) as opposed to secular, pagan history (*historia pagana*), but also the freedom of speech and religious expression are seriously neglected. One could speak, in the line of Voegelin and Schelling, of Europe’s *pneumapathology* or “spiritual disease.”

II.

The disoriented and demagogues

It can’t be the purpose of religion, science or politics to sow hatred, to justify and affirm Europe’s state of alienation. The disorder and disintegration at present is characterized by misconstructions of reality by the “disoriented” and “demagogues.” Buber analyzed this phenomenon of “false prophets” in opposition to “true prophets”:

... The true prophets are the true politicians of reality, for they proclaim their political tidings from the viewpoint of the complete historical reality, which it is given them to see. The false prophets, the Politicians who foster illusions, use the power of their wishful thinking to tear a scrap out of historical reality and sew it into their guild of motley illusions. When they are out to influence through suggestion, they display the gay colors, and when they are asked for the material of truth, they point to the scrap, torn out of reality.

... False prophets are not godless. They adore the god “Success.” They themselves are in constant need of success and achieve it by promising it to the people. The craving for success governs their hearts and determines what rises from them. They do not deceive; they are deceived, and can breathe only in the air of deceit.¹⁶

Signs of Europe’s degradation and *egophany*, its manifestation of separate existence apart from the divine ground (contrasts with theophany) need to find the attempted restoration of the free conversation with God, and the open dialogue between man and man. The spiritual outbursts of today must, in opposition to “the air of deceit,” necessitate to maintain faith in God and to preserve our democracy for future generations.

The beginnings of a spiritual quest are approaching, and we could do with a “movement of love” (*motus amoris*). The motivation of *conversio* or *epistrophe*, the struggle between true “order” vs. “disorder” are weighed and being felt in Europe. Currently, Hellenic philosophy and Judeo-Christian revelation are being replaced in the public sphere, in politics, in universities, not by “Islam” as some might argue, but by an extreme secular and atheistic under-

standing of human life over a wide area. Europe's civilization once again is under threat, the problems of ethnic and cultural diversity, and warnings about "mass immigration," have led to a blatant intolerance which, according to some, is not much different from the rise of National Socialism in the 1930s.

The threat to European society, to values and identity, to justice and compassion, is not as some would like us to believe "Islam" or any other religion, nor an ethnic race or nationality. And so the solution is *not* the banning of churches, synagogues or mosques, nor "ethnic registration"¹⁷ or even worse the "ethnic cleansing" of our cities and streets, i.e. the disposal of groups of people who believe and think differently. But the threat in Europe is first of all within us, within each person's heart and mind. It is the spiritual illiteracy and amnesia; it is the deep rooted—in capitals—FEAR for the unknown and for *the Other*¹⁸ that is most alarming.

Above all, it is the ancient old bewildering experience of *Eros tyrannos*, the lust for power—one could call it "original sin," *libido dominandi* or *Wille zur Macht*—that still corrupts religion and politics. In Voegelin's commentary the *Eros tyrannos* is "the satanic double of the Socratic Eros [citing Plato, *Rep.* 573B, D]. . . . The desire that turns the soul toward the Good and the desire that succumbs to the fascination of Evil are intimately related."¹⁹ Both Eroses are modes of *mania*, not unfamiliar to the current European situation, and there is always a chance that the evil daemon takes over, "the danger of straying from the difficult path of the spirit and of the falling into the abyss of pride."²⁰ The *Eros tyrannos* is dangerous; it could stir the human heart to rebellion and to the "spirituality of evil,"²¹ that is by hating God and overpowering our fellow man to such extent that it could send *the Other* towards a spiritual and/or psychical death. In *The Cost of Discipleship* Bonhoeffer reminds us of Matthew 7.13-23, discussing such dark powers of perverted and tyrannical order related to the "false prophets":

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them...²²

III.

Dutch Eros tyrannos

An illustration of a “false prophet” or “demagogue” who stirs the *Eros tyrannos* within society is Geert Wilders (b. September 6, 1963), the controversial Dutch politician and leader of the Freedom party (PVV or “*Partij voor de Vrijheid*”) in the Netherlands. As a former Catholic, now atheist and/or agnostic,²³ Wilders has become the chief voice speaking out against what he calls “the multicultural nightmare” (“*De multiculturele nachtmerrie*”), “the mass immigration” (*de massa-immigratie*) and “the Islamization” (“*de Islamisering*”) of the Netherlands.

His “art” of politics (*techne politike*) or strategy for gaining political power till now has been effective, appealing to the prejudices, emotions, fears and expectations of the Dutch public via impassioned rhetoric against Islam. By means of “free speech,” global media propaganda, and by “pro-American” and “pro-Israel” sentiments he seeks international support and finance for his stance to eradicate Islam from the West. Using nationalist, populist and religious themes, the demagogy and melodrama of Wilders’s ideas have been the subject of global debate ever since.

Careful analysis shows that Wilders’s nationalistic dreams and antagonistic dichotomies (“us” vs. “them”) are based on fear. Characteristic of what Voegelin calls in *Race and State* the “counteridea”²⁴ (Wilders: “us” vs. “the Islam”) is to push towards conflict and/or ethnic violence. It is astonishing that “Islam” by way of Wilders’s ongoing provocation should have become the “counteridea” of the tolerant Dutch, and with such extraordinary intensity, considering that in the Netherlands Muslims account for only 6 percent of the population.²⁵ How could Wilders’s simplistic caricature of Islam and of such a small minority of Muslims evoke so much fear in the Netherlands and in Europe?

Undoubtedly this fear stems from (i) the horrific images of the series of coordinated suicide attacks by al-Qaeda upon the United States on September 11, 2001, but also from (ii) the Madrid train bombings in Spain on March 11, 2004, and (iii) the London Tube and bus bombings on July 7, 2005, and is largely due to feelings of insecurity on the part of the Dutch people, after (iv) the 2002 assassination of the Dutch professor and politician Pim Fortuyn by animal rights activist Volkert van der Graaf, who saw in Fortuyn a danger to Dutch society, and (v) the brutal murder of the author, film director and well-known critic of Islam, Theo van Gogh, who was killed by Muslim extremist “Mohammed B.”²⁶ in Amsterdam

in 2004. These shocking events sparked a storm of outrage. They widened and polarized the debate in the Netherlands and in Europe about the position of immigrants, of Muslims, and stimulated a deep-seated anxiety—repeatedly expressed in anti-Islam comments—of being dominated by the Islam.

Wilders has used this wide-spread anxiety and the deaths of Fortuyn and Van Gogh to advocate his strong anti-Islam views and to protect himself against any criticism. He says that “the elite” —that is, anyone who disagrees with him—are out to “demonize” (*“demoniseren”*) his person, like “they” did with Fortuyn. Out of a fear for violence and for making it worse by criticizing him, many Dutch intellectuals didn’t dare to say anything. To challenge Wilders, even healthy criticism was avoided because of what had happened to Fortuyn and Van Gogh. In the mean time Wilders used his “free speech” to talk about war and the “real possibility” of race riots.²⁷ Furthermore, the atmosphere in Dutch society is damaged.

Wilders’s belief in an Islamic organization of enormous proportions, in what he calls a “violent political ideology” that would be directed with diabolical shrewdness, with “sharia law” and “terrorism” toward the ultimate, total economic and political enslavement of the West, has seriously touched on people’s fears. Not only in Europe are these uncertainties growing but also in America and in Israel. There has been much guessing about the current suspicion toward and fear of the “Islamic riddle”—perhaps a completely satisfactory answer is not possible from a Western perspective; perhaps this historical situation cannot be further analyzed or reduced right now, and perhaps it should not be asked why some people like Wilders have a closer inner affinity with one group, while hating another.

Internationally, however, Wilders is best known for his fierce criticism of Islam, summing up his views by saying, “I don’t hate Muslims, I hate Islam.”²⁸ Although identifying Islamic extremists as a small minority of Muslims, he believes that there is no such thing as “moderate Islam.” Wilders is warning the West that Islam is not a “religion” but a “totalitarian ideology,” and that the Qur’an “calls on Muslims to oppress, persecute or kill Christians, Jews, dissidents and non-believers, to beat and rape women and to establish an Islamic state by force.”²⁹

The terminology and expressions of Wilders entirely strip the Islam of its religious dimension, especially by saying that it is *not* a “monotheistic religion,” and by reducing it to a “violent political and totalitarian ideology” of the extremists. Thereby he ignores the more constructive, compassionate and spiritual side of Islam, i.e.

the religious experiences of reasonable Muslims who act respectfully and believe that God, “the Merciful,” and “the Compassionate” is one (and incomparable) and that the purpose of life is not to murder or to terrorize, but to worship God.

In national newspaper *De Volkskrant*, Wilders portrayed the Qur’an as a manifesto for violence and wrote: “Ban this wretched book like *Mein Kampf* is banned!”³⁰ The call to treat the Qur’an in the same way as Adolf Hitler’s biography, which has been banned from sale in the Netherlands for over 60 years, is just one of the remarks in a long line of Islam controversies sparked by Wilders. Living under tight security after death threats by suspected Islamist terrorists,³¹ he is already claimed by some Americans as their “hero” and “freedom fighter.” But are his words and deeds really that honorable and heroic?

There are good reasons to assume that Wilders, as one of the most thriving politicians in recent Dutch history, sincerely believes in his fearful anti-Islam diatribes and untruths of existence. His revolt against the *conditio humana* and the attempt to overlay its reality by the construction of a second reality that uses “the Islam,” and excludes its followers, is disquieting. Wilders affirms:

I’ve had enough of Islam in the Netherlands; let not one more Muslim immigrate, I’m tired of the worship of Allah and Mohammed in the Netherlands: not one more mosque. I’ve had enough of the Qur’an in the Netherlands: forbid that fascist book. Enough is enough.³²

The unconstructive *metastasis*,³³ i.e., the aggressive change, transformation, and revolution Wilders hopes to evoke in the Netherlands, are based on unrealistically expected transformations of human beings, of Dutch society, and the structure of existence. The fundamental form of his anti-Islam and utopian expectations is that it provokes an escape from the tension of existence, a movement out of *humanity*, out of what Voegelin calls the *metaxy*, toward a “true Dutch identity” or “freedom” (“*vrijheid*”) in union with one of its poles, namely with that of a society without *otherness*, without Islam. Or in Wilders’s own words: “It is time for the great spring cleaning of our streets” (“*Het is tijd voor de grote schoonmaak van onze straten*”).³⁴

Wilders led the Freedom party (PVV) to a third place in an unstable Dutch political landscape. Appealing to national pride and by focusing persistently on “mass immigration” (“*massa-immigratie*”) he blames the Islam for the nation’s social and economic troubles. His rhetoric skills during the political campaign gained evermore

influence over the media, as he used his charisma and oratorical skills to acquire allies in the United States and in Israel.

Speaking of “hope” and “optimism”—even if fear for “Eurabia” is the party’s driving force—the Freedom party (PVV) wants to invigorate the Netherlands to choose *against* Islam, *against* immigration, *against* human beings who think and believe differently.³⁵ Wilders clearly articulated his stance in the 2010 election debates: “The faith ‘Islam’ is a dangerous evil ideology for which there is, in our opinion, no place in the Netherlands.” (“*het geloof ‘de Islam’ is een gevaarlijke kwaadaardige ideologie waar wat ons betreft in Nederland geen plaats voor is*”).³⁶

The kind of *metastatic faith* involved here is the expectation of a transformation of reality in the Netherlands, and of what it means to be “Dutch” (“*Nederlands*”). Hence, Wilders’s is creating a new nationalistic “anti-faith” that expects such an anti-Islam transformation to be caused by an act of political and possibly military intervention.³⁷ Conceivably, one may speak here of a minor Dutch “metastatic apocalypse”: the radical transformation in the Netherlands that would be produced by such “anti-faith.”

Wilders’s anti-Islam rhetoric in the international media is repetitive, simplistic and bigoted, and yet successful. Pushing the limits of so called “free speech” and Dutch tolerance, he was led to a court case after judges ruled in January 2009 that a right-wing Member of Parliament who compared the Qur’an to *Mein Kampf* should be put on trial for inciting racial hatred and discrimination. So, Wilders faced charges for his outspoken anti-Islam comments and his film *Fitna*, which juxtaposed the Qur’an and terrorist attacks including the September 11, 2001 attacks and the 2005 London Tube and bus bombings.³⁸

Despite all controversy Wilders’s eagerness and overbearing pride (*superbia vitae*) won him more than one and a half million Dutch vote in the 2010 elections, thereby revealing the political and religious bewilderment in the Netherlands and in Europe. The PVV program mirrors the sentiment—often a mixture of nationalistic pride and fear, of half-truths and lies, of exaggeration and overstatement—by which Wilders tries to persuade the entire Dutch nation to choose against Islam:

Centuries flew our flag on every sea and was “the tricolor” the symbol of freedom. Of a people who decided over their own destiny. But that was long ago [...] The Freedom Party sees a country that really has to say goodbye to the rotten leftist ideals of the past. Al Gore is a basket case. The hated multicultural experiment has had above all serious draw-

backs and Islam does not bring us cultural enrichment but “sharia-fatalism,” “jihad-terrorism” and hatred against gays and Jews. Across Europe we see the same problems with Islam [...] Who thinks that “Islamization” is a matter of *one issue* cannot count. The “mass immigration” has enormous implications for all facets of our society. It is economically a disaster; it affects the quality of our education, increases insecurity in the streets, leading to an exodus from our cities, expels Jews and gays and flushes decennia of women’s emancipation through the toilet. To explain just one sector: even our healthcare system “Islamizes” rapidly. Muslim women who refuse treatment by male doctors, “muslimas” who do not want to be washed by male nurses, Islamic elderly who demand from the cooks in their nursing homes “halal food,” employees of home care who need an interpreter because the patient speaks only Turkish or Arab. And who do you think pays for the interpreter? And why is that interpreter needed in the first place? Theo van Gogh said it so well about Job Cohen and his attitude towards Moroccans. Van Gogh wrote that Cohen claimed that: “You belong to us!,” instead of asking “What are you doing here?” We do ask that question. What are they doing here? Who let them in? The multicultural nightmare that is inflicted on us, we cannot and we do not accept it as a fact. The Dutch people have not asked for mass immigration and it should therefore not pay the price. The fault lies not with Henk and Ingrid. The blame lies with the leftist elites who think that the world looks like Woodstock. The choice before us on June 9 [2010 Dutch general election] is simple: to further the multicultural abyss or restoration of our traditional norms and values. Choosing security or opt for even more crime. Choosing Islam or opt for the Netherlands. Choosing *our* flag or the flag of the EU-multicultural-utopia. Choosing more of the same or opt for hope and optimism. This is a time to decide. The PVV has chosen. These are our choices.³⁹

The 2010 political program of the Dutch Freedom party (PVV) blurs the complexities and development within the Netherlands—pertaining to Dutch history, politics and religion—with (i) an economic recession (ii) political instability (iii) anti-immigrant sentiments and racism (iv) feelings of unsafety and (v) the global fear of radical Islam and of terrorism in the West since 9/11. The strong assaults on Islam by Wilders, specifically on what he terms the “Islamization” (“*Islamisering*”) of the Netherlands and of the West, are going a step too far: “ethnic registration for everyone”⁴⁰—Stimulated by the PVV’s victory some Dutch citizens are already

arguing about which “generation,” “ethnic group” or “race” may possibly stay in the Netherlands and who should go.

Wilders’s desire (*pothos*), the yearning and longing for mundane “Success” and fulfillments is misguided. His powerful desire to reach out indefinitely toward the unknown and unheard of: the creation of a Dutch intolerance that dogmatically and exclusively shuts out the Islam with unlimited ambition, is injudicious. Not only does he oppose mosque building, Muslim schools, and does he advocate banning what he calls the “fascist Qur’an” from the Netherlands, additionally, he proposed to tax the Muslim headscarf, which he described as a “head-rag-tax” (“*kopvoddentaks*”).⁴¹ Any Muslim woman who wants to wear a headscarf would have to apply for a license, and pay one thousand Euros. It is a “penalty” against what Wilders calls “street pollution” (“*straat vervuiling*”)—he says the money raised would go toward women’s emancipation programs.

Wilders’s argument that in the Dutch context Islam and the Qur’an which he denounces as a “violent political ideology” should be prohibited, just as Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* is forbidden for sale in the Netherlands,⁴² is a political move to distract and possibly hide the equivalences between his own political ideology and that of Hitler’s National Socialism in the 1930s. Although people tend to strongly react when critics analyze the PVV program in light of the Nazi period, they should not forget that Wilders was the first to refer to “Hitler,” “fascism” and “totalitarianism” to make his points clear about Islam. Even though Wilders sows fear and goes far in what he says, he is *not* “evil” or “godless,” as some Dutch people might argue, he simply is deceived by adoring the god “Success.” He seems to be in constant need of media attention, of “victory” and achieves it by promising it to the Dutch people. The craving for success and media coverage governs his actions and determines what rises from them. Perhaps a comparison with Nazism is not so useful; however, a study of the Dutch situation makes it painfully clear how far politicians in the Netherlands continue to tolerate the dangerous manifestation of Wilders’s provocations against Islam. The cynical use of “identity politics” to set people up against each other for political gain is not a new method invented by the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV).

Wilders as convinced supporter of capitalism, however, seems more of a right-wing nationalist than a “fascist,” but he does use Islam in a way similar to how the Nazis caricatured the Jews in the 1930s. Wilders blames everything on Islam, like Hitler blamed the Jews for all problems. He has found a scapegoat. The cultural difference is that in the present economic crisis in the Netherlands,

and in Europe—unlike the crisis in the 1930s—most people are still living in houses and have a job, and are not utterly hopeless for the future.

Yet, the irony about Wilders's rhetoric and the PVV program remains. On the one hand, when you exchange his term "Muslim(s)" for "Jew(s)" you find some uncomfortable similarities to the twentieth century's National Socialism. On the other hand, unlike Hitler, Wilders's emotional discourse is generally not one of destruction—at least till now. Instead he uses comical terminology, a sort of absurdity, and strong verbal communication, even to the point that some people may think it is really "funny." The creation of deformed language symbols, however, should be taken serious and although Wilders's hilarious words might on occasion sound "funny," they possibly will not lead to a "comical" outcome. He dangerously plays with fire by globally challenging Muslim extremists in using unwarranted anti-Islam comments. Thus helping to create and incite in the Netherlands and in Europe the very extremism he hopes to defeat.

The answer of the Freedom party (PVV) may not yet be one of annihilation or elimination in the Nazi sense, but still is a fearful protection against what they see as the uncontrollable "Islamic flood," by "raising the dikes" in the hope of "turning the tide." Wilders's immigration stop for Muslims, his policy against Islam in preventing the so called "flood," differs from Hitler's "Final Solution" (*Die Endlösung*) for the Jewish people, but his ideas and ideological concepts are certainly deformed or even racist and xenophobic. The articulation of an intentional genocide as in Hitler's case is in Wilders's discourse not clearly evident, but his comments on Islam, on war and ethnic violence are fear-provoking.

Even though Wilders successfully won new votes during the last election it was not as much through virtues defined in terms of beauty and goodness (*Kalokagathia*), as through appeals to the ethnic and nationalistic prejudices and anxieties of the Dutch people. Debasing the meaning of the term "freedom" (*vrijheid*) the PVV insinuates that the Netherlands, but also Europe can only be "free" (*vrij zijn*) when it rids itself of Islam and of the Qur'an. These political ideas of so called "*vrijheid*" are an illusionary freedom; a creation of second reality, which in Reality only leads to hatred, violence and bigotry. Voegelin's term "second reality," drawn from Robert Musil's *The Man without Qualities*,⁴³ refers to a fictitious world imagined as true by a self-alienated person who uses it to mask and thereby "eclipse" genuine reality—which in a healthy society contains religious freedom for Muslims, Jews, Christians,

and for anyone else.

The causes of disorder related to such antagonism in the Netherlands are revealed by a variety of secondary symptoms, like the disruptive indulgence in anti-Islam infatuation. Alarming is for instance that ordinary Dutch people since the rapid growth of Wilders's Freedom Party increasingly feel legitimized to display immoral behavior toward immigrants because of their skin color and/or religion. The attentive reader discovers through careful analysis of Wilders's anti-Islam propaganda that behind the secondary symptoms lays the fundamental problem of the *apostrophe*—the withdrawal of man from his own humanity. The experience of an alienated consciousness, according to Voegelin, always retains such an index of negativity or distress, a residual awareness of its imbalance and closure:

A man who is (for example) in the state of atheistic engagement or revolt, at the same time feels that he is falling into non-existence. You are *in* existence if you are attuned to reality, which is God's reality, and you fall out of it if you are in revolt against it. A state of alienation, if it has reached the proper intellectual consciousness, will always be accompanied by some sort of uneasiness. This need not be completely conscious but can express itself in all sorts of diversions.⁴⁴

Wilders hides his revolt by saying that he chooses for women and gay rights, and is committed to "the traditional Judeo-Christian and humanistic values that have made the Netherlands the success it is today."⁴⁵ This may sound a noble intention were it not that certain ethnic groups will pay the price, particularly the Muslim community. Hence, the twist in his rhetoric is marked by concepts which promote an "exodus from reality," the escape from the tension of existence, wherein Muslims and Islam whether one likes it or not play their part. And so, his flight towards a so called "freedom" ("*vrijheid*") from Islam is impossible without eventually turning to destructive means.

Wilders's ideological system is essentially built on "fear" ("*angst*"), on a stressful anxiety for what he terms the uncontrollable "tsunami of Islamization," a "wave" or "flood" that will engulf the unsustainable sleepy West. It is not based on the balanced vision of the *polis*, a state or society characterized by a sense of community founded on the shared *nous* or *caritas*; Voegelin's description (following Aristotle) of a healthy society: "'the polis is an association of like people [*koinonia ton homoion*]' striving for the best life, and not an association of just any human beings."⁴⁶

Most people in Europe today would agree with Wilders that Islamic terrorism is wrong, but so is the extreme violent behavior of Jews, Christians or anyone else in the world. Addressing extremism and terrorism, the clash of cultures and of religions, and highlighting the economic and social problems of a multicultural society is one thing, but to create a political program that deliberately sets out to radically exclude from reality, and to keep out of the Netherlands, a particular ethnic group—in this case anyone who has something to do with Islam or the Qur'an—is a grave distortion.

The great political misconstruction of the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV) is in the direction of the transcendent, as with Wilders there is *no* real direction towards the transcendent. Because he cuts himself off. And since man cannot live or does not live without accounting for himself in terms of a “ground,” Wilders seeks a replacement, a “substitute ground.” Voegelin explained that when “the Ground,” which is the transcendent ground, has been imaginatively eclipsed, and replaced by substitute world-immanent pseudo-grounds of being, something seriously goes wrong.⁴⁷ In Wilders’s case the substitute ground is the attempt to order Dutch society and history according to an “anti-Islam” principle and the struggle of races and/or religion. History has taught us that such principles can only lead to severe disorder and destruction.

Finally, Islam does not have to become a Dutch or European problem, and neither does Wilders. Forgetting the past in this pandemonium, however, could be a dangerous leeway to eradication. On Friday morning July 10, 1942, during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands, the Dutch Jewish writer Etty Hillesum⁴⁸ concluded in her diary: “One moment it is Hitler, the next it is Ivan the Terrible; one moment it is Inquisition and the next war, pestilence, earthquake, or famine. Ultimately what matters most is to bear the pain, to cope with it, and to keep a small corner of one’s soul unsullied, come what may.”⁴⁹

IV.

Europe’s search for true “homonoia”

What ought to be promoted in the Netherlands and in Europe today is the universal calling of humanity, the “exodus within reality,” i.e. open existence in the *metaxy* oriented toward its transcendent pole, towards God. This means among other things, saying “No!” to extremism and racism, “No!” to any political ideology that wants to induce some kind of “apartheid system.” Our real exodus is the surrender to “life” (“*leven*”) in the *metaxy*, it is the struggle for hu-

man dignity and the process of transcendence: *Fruitio Dei*, a rejoicing in God on the horizon, no matter what religion, race or color.

In order to maintain the traditional Judeo-Christian and humanistic values in the Netherlands, and in the West, a more compassionate vision is desirable, a *politike episteme* or understanding of how to live in society which brings justice to all people. The solution to religious conflict or to major social, cultural and economic problems is not established by “scapegoating”—the practice of singling out one ethnic or religious group—or by evoking the raw and antagonistic choice between us and in capital THEM. Besides, who equals the dismal THEM? Is that “the Islam,” “the Dutch Muslims,” “the people who speak Arabic and read the Qur’an,” “those who believe in Allah and in his prophet Muhammad,” “intellectuals who disagree with the PVV”... to be specific, who is the target group that eventually will be excluded and/or deported?

Why does a populist such as Wilders persist in his *hybris*, his overbearing arrogance and pride? Besides a crisis of values and identity, and the problem of alienation in Europe from which he benefits his success in the Netherlands, he outplays man’s *libido dominandi*, the “pleasure in dominating,” the “will to power” (“*Wille zur Macht*”). Voegelin uses the term *idiotes*,⁵⁰ as in Heraclitus, to refer to those who live in a private imaginary world of “closed existence” instead of the shared, common (*xynon*) world known through *logos*—i.e., “reason,” “rational capacity,” “definition,” “intelligible structure,” or an “analytical account” (as compared with the creation of social myths by the disoriented and demagogues).⁵¹ Hence, it is by any means surprising that someone like Geert Wilders has surrounded himself, and “closed” his existence off with bodyguards and high security measures, which are ever-increasing. His imaginary world, his fear and anxiety for a self-created “Islam ghost”—by relentlessly provoking Islamic extremists in the media—have cut him off from life, from dialogue and true meeting.

Europe’s refusal to apperceive the intellectual and political constructions of second realities, by scientists (e.g. Richard Dawkins)⁵² and politicians alike, is disturbing. The ideological ban on serious questioning is just odious. So, it looks as if a long *via dolorosa* is ahead of us.⁵³ The Voegelinian diagnostic we may use here is to determine which part of reality has been excluded to make these fake systems possible. Always excluded or distorted—if not fully eclipsed—is the experience of the divine ground, in Buber’s terms the dialogue between God and man. Voegelin saw that the modern restriction of consciousness to sense perception is the hidden trick

in the construction of systems. So, he recognized an important criterion for diagnosing a fake system:

The purpose of the diagnosis is to determine which part of reality has been excluded in order to make the construction of a fake system possible. The realities excluded can vary widely, but the one item that always has to be excluded is the experience of man's tension toward the divine ground of his existence. Once the consciousness of existential tension is recognized as the critical experience that an ideologist must exclude if he wants to make his own state of alienation compulsory for everybody, the problem of consciousness of this tension moves into the center of philosophical thought. The understanding of both Classic and Christian philosophy, as well as of ideological deformations of existence, presupposes the understanding of consciousness in the fullness of its dimensions. The characteristic of what may be called the "modern conception of consciousness" is the construction of consciousness by the model of sense perceptions of objects in external reality. This restriction of the model of consciousness to objects of external reality becomes the more or less hidden trick in the construction of systems in the nineteenth century.⁵⁴

Classic philosophers knew that consciousness is the experience of structures and of turning toward the divine ground. If sense perception is dominant, experiences of God, of divine reality are eclipsed and must be deformed into propositions about transcendent reality, about *the Other*. Hence, propositional metaphysics, but also radical atheism, religious fanaticism and political extremism are sensitive to a brawny deformation of reality. What challenges the ideas of a person like Wilders is that (moderate) Muslims, who are dedicated to Islam, share in "human nature," in that which is constant in the fundamental being of humanity, especially all of those qualities that are inherent to *metaxy*, existence, and horizon. As defined by Voegelin in *Anamnesis*: "At its core human nature ... is the openness of the questioning knowledge and the knowing question about the ground."⁵⁵

For Voegelin, Buber and Bonhoeffer, the turning toward or turning away from God and man, from the divine ground are the fundamental categories descriptive of human order and disorder. The "darkening" (*scotosis*)⁵⁶ in Europe, that is to say the turning toward darkness; the obscuring of sectors of reality and the voluntary ignorance is problematic. It is time for Europe that true *homonoia* in the Greek sense must be rediscovered, the "like-mindedness" as in Aristotle's friendship, which is based on likeness in participation in

nous, not the sharing of “opinions” (*doxa*)⁵⁷ or of “substitute grounds” such as the anti-position *against* Islam, but Europe’s sharing in *nous* as the dynamic movement elicited by the attraction of transcendent perfection, of God.

People in Europe may have to find “the beautiful” (*kalon*) in recovering the traditional Christian notion of the participation in the *nous* and in the *caritas* of Christ, precisely in true dialogue with Islam, with the Muslim world. Even though the interreligious dialogue with Islam may have seemed difficult if not impossible at times, Europe’s *homonoia* in general should refer to the idea of *peace* among citizen, equivalent to Alexander the Great’s use of peace among the subjects of his ecumenic empire, his plan “to gain for all men harmony [*homonoia*] and peace [*eirene*] and community [*koinonia*] among one another.”⁵⁸

V.

To recapture reality

Considering the current signs of spiritual disorder and deculturation in Europe, that is to say the loss of culture by a withdrawal of man from his own humanity, we are obliged to make an effort to recapture transcendent reality and address what Voegelin calls the “leap in being,” the moment of surrender to the Question of transcendence and to an experience-symbolization beyond the horizon. This “Question” refers to the tension of existence in its aspect as a questioning unrest seeking, not simply particular truth, but still more the transcendent pole of truth as such. Voegelin emphasizes: “not just any question but the quest concerning the mysterious ground of all Being.”⁵⁹ We could speak of the renewal of “existential consciousness,” of the rekindling of reflective self-awareness of human existence in the *metaxy*, to be precise in the tension between poles of “immanence” and “transcendence,” “finitude” and “infinity,” “imperfection” and “perfection,” and so on.⁶⁰

Reflection on Europe’s blatant secularism and extremism benefits to the extent that it builds upon rational and religious insight into the moral potential and mystical dimension of human beings who seek to resist the attempt of modern-day ideologies and of radical atheism to make history without God and to found it on the strength of man alone. For any of us who like to conserve the divine ordering of human (political) life, few thinkers of the Nazi period have surpassed Voegelin, Buber and Bonhoeffer in opposing the brutal dishonesty at the core of totalitarian movements. Their diagnosis of the “eclipse of reality,” the “eclipse of God,”⁶¹ and the

disorder at the root of closed societies was matched by a common concern about the philosophical and theological resources for the rediscovery and defense of human civilization. They fought against the willed, perverse closure of consciousness against reality, especially the reality of *metaxy* existence. Eclipse in the European context is equivalent to what Voegelin calls “closed existence,” it is a state that may become habitual and unconscious, but never entirely free from the pressure of reality and the anxiety produced in society by the attempt to evade it.

European culture needs to be interpreted again as a process in which soul and character are formed through experiences of transcendence and love, and possibly through other virtues such as faith, hope, reason (*ratio*, *nous*) which are essential to “open existence.” The “openness” and the mode of existence in which consciousness is consistently and unreservedly oriented toward truth and toward the transcendent pole of the tension of existence: God. Consequently, *Ratio* or reason as defined by Voegelin in “What Is Political Reality?”,⁶² is the directional factor in the tension of consciousness “as the quest for the ground,”⁶³ which orders it and thereby gives it structure as open inquiry. In this sense, ratio is the existential response of *nous* to the Question.⁶⁴ Hence, God or the divine ground—and not the anti-Islam propaganda of someone like Wilders—are considered as supreme reality, as *realissimum*, that is to say the “most real.”⁶⁵

Greater emphasis should be placed on the social aspects of the process of decline, of “closure” or “closed existence,” which contrasts “openness.” The atheistic de-divinization of the world whereby the world is interpreted as empty of God, or lacking the dimension of transcendence, is disconcerting. “Reason” is not a calculative function as some modern “scientists” would like us to believe, but rather the expression in thinking of the love of “the ground of being” or “divine reality.”⁶⁶ Reason is the human capacity or “faculty” that becomes active through “the adequate articulation and symbolization of the questioning consciousness.”⁶⁷ Consequently, the present cultural deformation, the demolition of reason or the destruction of the order of the soul, damages the core of man and of society, which should be “formed” by and receive its vital principle from the love between God and man, or in Voegelin terms, from the love of transcendent perfection inherent in the fundamental tension of existence.⁶⁸

Question is, why should the “spiritual man” (*Daimonios aner*), the person sensitive to the pull (*helkein*) of transcendence, bother philosophizing in the context of Europe’s “closure,”⁶⁹ in the face of

secularism and radical atheism, of swelling ignorance (*amathia*)⁷⁰ and folly? Voegelin's answer is demanding: to defend and recapture Reality!⁷¹ Seeing that religious extremism and the corruption of language by current ideologies makes honest dialogue to a great extent impossible, the comprehending community of language must be (re-) discovered and established. Voegelin in *Autobiographical Reflections* puts it in plain words:

Anybody with an informed and reflective mind who lives in the twentieth century since the end of the First World War, as I did, finds himself hemmed in, if not oppressed, from all sides by a flood of ideological language—meaning thereby language symbols that pretend to be concepts but in fact are unanalyzed *topoi* or topics. Moreover, anybody who is exposed to this dominant climate of opinion has to cope with the problem that language is a social phenomenon. He cannot deal with the users of ideological language as partners in a discussion, but he has to make them the object of investigation. There is no community of language with the representatives of the dominant ideologies. Hence, the community of language that he himself wants to use in order to criticize the users of ideological language must first be discovered and, if necessary, established. The peculiar situation just characterized is not the fate of the philosopher for the first time in history. More than once in history, language has been degraded and corrupted to such a degree that it no longer can be used for expressing the truth of existence.⁷²

As the language symbols in different corners of European society have lost their contact with reality; they cannot be used for expressing the truth of existence, due to an intellectual terrorism of secular institutions as the mass media, university departments, foundations, commercial publishing houses, and the ferocious misuse of the internet.⁷³ A way of regaining transcendent reality is the recourse to the thinkers of the past who had not lost reality or who were engaged in regaining it.⁷⁴ Voegelin explored the techniques and structure of deformations and developed a vision by which deformation and its symbolization can be categorized. In particular “the refusal to apperceive” has become a central theme in his works for the understanding of ideological aberrations and deformations.⁷⁵ Voegelin's methodological rules would insist on going back to the experiences that engender symbols:

Recapturing reality in opposition to its contemporary deformation requires a considerable amount of work. One has to

reconstruct the fundamental categories of existence, experience, consciousness, and reality. One has at the same time to explore the technique and structure of the deformations that clutter up the daily routine; and one has to develop the concepts by which existential deformation and its symbolic expression can be categorized. This work, then, must be conducted not only in opposition to the deformed ideologies but also to deformations of reality by thinkers who ought to be its preservers, such as theologians. In the concrete effort to find one's way through a maze of corrupt language toward reality and its adequate linguistic expression, certain rules emerge that are not always to the liking of our contemporary intellectuals. The methodologically first, and perhaps most important, rule of my work is to go back to the experiences that engender symbols.⁷⁶

Generally speaking, the reservoirs of reality in European society are to be found, Voegelin believes, "in the sciences that deal with intact experiences and symbolizations of reality, even if the sciences themselves have been badly damaged by the influence of the ideological climate."⁷⁷ We have to reconstruct, in Voegelin's terms, the fundamental categories of existence, experience, consciousness and (spiritual) reality: "In resistance to the dominance of idols—i.e., of language symbols that have lost their contact with reality—one has to rediscover the experiences of reality as well as the language that will adequately express them."⁷⁸

All language symbols in our Western culture today are suspected of corruption, especially the language used in the public sphere.⁷⁹ Having gone through periods of severe distortion of existence, Europe's phenomenon has been understood by Voegelin as "pathological"; and as it is being discovered as pathological, the question of a spiritual, well-ordered existence again ought to attract attention. The phenomenon of the rediscovery of existential order is not peculiar to the modern period. We can observe a similar situation in the time when Plato and Aristotle started their work, in the Classic Greek period.⁸⁰ In the conventional interpretation of Plato, it is practically forgotten, Voegelin argues, that the central Platonic concepts are dichotomic:

The term *philosophy* does not stand alone but gains its meaning from its opposition to the predominant *philodoxy*. Problems of justice are not developed in the abstract but in opposition to wrong conceptions of justice, which in fact reflect the injustice current in the environment. The character of the Philosopher himself gains its specific meaning through its opposition to that of the Sophist, who engages in

misconstructions of reality for the purpose of gaining social ascendance and material profits.⁸¹

This might well be the situation in Europe today, in which the philosopher has to find men and women of his own kind in a community that comprehends both the present and the past. Although there is, according to Voegelin, always a dominant climate of ideological opinion, there is also present, even in our society, a large community of scholars who have not lost contact with reality and of thinkers who try to regain the contact that they are in danger of losing.

VI.

Fides formata

Recalling its spiritual and Judeo-Christian heritage, Europe's political community (*koinonia politike*) needs to rediscover its *fides formata*, a "formed faith," that is faith with its vital principle, namely "love"—which means no "fear" and no "hatred." Aquinas used the term "love" for the adequate orientation of the soul toward God. So, not only through correct teachings about Him but also through participation in divine love experienced within the soul. According to Aquinas, it is love (*caritas*) that is the soul or vital principle of faith, which is a more developed faith than *fides informis*,⁸² which, lacking love as its vital principle is incomplete.⁸³ "Deformed faith," but also "unformed faith" in today's Europe is the kind of faith that lacks its vital principle, which is "love" (*caritas*). In Buber's words, "man's standing before the face of God" is threatened. He writes:

From the earliest times the reality of the relation of faith, man's standing before the face of God, world-happening as dialogue, has been threatened by the impulse to control the power yonder. Instead of understanding events as calls which make demands on one, one wishes oneself to demand without having to hearken. "I have," says man, "power over the powers I conjure." And that continues, with sundry modifications, wherever one celebrates rites without being turned to the Thou and without really meaning its Presence.⁸⁴

The emphasis on a *fides formata* is advanced herein that Voegelin's characterization of the "open society" is mirrored by Bonhoeffer's Christian *Ethics*⁸⁵ and by Buber's *Das dialogische Prinzip*, his philosophy of dialogue,⁸⁶ to convey the directness and living force of the ancient biblical word.⁸⁷ In assessing the moral vitality of indi-

viduals and religious and/or political groups in Europe today, their search for the ground of existence remains significant. Specifically in terms of the *summum bonum* or “highest good,”⁸⁸ their *euboulia* or “wise judgment” in private and public affairs may evoke in us the *epistrophe*,⁸⁹ a turning toward the divine ground after having previously been lost or gone astray through self-alienation (*allotriosis*).

Bonhoeffer’s Christian realism exposes a similar tension between man’s finiteness and inner freedom, his everlasting struggle in the call away from idolatry and “cheap grace” (“*Billige Gnade*”) towards the “costly grace” (“*Teure Gnade*”) of discipleship.⁹⁰ He sums it up by bringing it back to the law of the true prophets:

[I]t is clear from the foregoing that the disciple has no special privilege or power of his own in all his intercourse with others. The mainspring of his life and work is the strength which comes from fellowship with Jesus Christ. Jesus offers his disciples a simple rule of thumb which will enable even the least sophisticated of them to tell whether his intercourse with others is on the right lines or not. All he need do is to say “I” instead of “Thou,” and put himself in the other man’s place. “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets.” The moment he does that, the disciple forfeits all advantage over other men, and can no longer excuse in himself what he condemns in others. He is as strict in condemning evil in himself as he was before with others, and as lenient with the evil in others as he was before to himself. The evil in the other person is exactly the same evil as in ourselves. There is only *one* judgement, *one* law, and *one* grace. Henceforth the disciple will look upon other men as forgiven sinners who owe their lives to the love of God. “This is the law and the prophets”—for this is none other than the supreme commandment: to love God above all things and our neighbours as ourselves.⁹¹

This tensional relationship is found in Buber’s analysis of man’s drifting away from the divine-human encounter toward the world of things, of “It” (German: “*Es*”), rather than his relationship with the “Eternal Thou” (“*Das ewige Du*”). Buber insists that with each you, we have the prospect to experience the conversing with the divine; that is to talk to the Eternal One.⁹² This relation with God and man is direct:

The relation to the Thou is direct. No system of ideas, no foreknowledge, and no fancy intervene between *I* and *Thou*. The memory itself is transformed, as it plunges out of its isolation into the unity of the whole. No aim, no lust, and no anticipation intervene between *I* and *Thou*. Desire itself is transformed as it plunges out of its dream into the appearance. Every means is an obstacle. Only when every means has collapsed does the meeting come about.⁹³

In other words, the polarities in the experiences of immanent and transcendent divine being bind us to commit ourselves to the moral choices that lie behind the purpose of our being in this world. In opposing the ideological perversion that one could be liberated by a “cultural atheistic revolution” and/or by a disposal of any of the three monotheistic religions, Voegelin, Buber and Bonhoeffer challenge us that the promise of inner freedom, of genuine liberty, requires an open, receptive, and generous spirit towards God and man, and towards the three monotheistic expressions of religious faith—despite their unique symbolizations, their differences. The understanding, the prudent action and practical wisdom (*phronesis*) of these three sensible sagacious human beings (*phronimos* or *uphronimos*) are in the Greek sense a guide to ethical virtue and have a contemplative emphasis (*nous*).⁹⁴

VII.

Surrender to the imago Dei

If our eyes and ears are the basis of any authority at all, besides a pile of anecdotal evidence, the programs of various political parties in Europe, and not only in the Netherlands, show that a hostile form of secularism is stirring our continent. As Bonhoeffer already had noticed in the twentieth century, “God as a working hypothesis in morals, politics, or science, has been surmounted and abolished; and the same thing has happened in philosophy and religion (Feuerbach!) [...] Anxious souls will ask what room there is left for God now; and as they know of no answer to the question, they condemn the whole development that has brought them to such straits.”⁹⁵ As a result, there is no other way to find God on the horizon, according to Bonhoeffer, then through love, repentance, and through *ultimate* honesty. He writes:

And we cannot be honest unless we recognize that we have to live in the world *etsi deus non daretur*. And this is just what we do recognize—before God! God himself compels

us to recognize it. So our coming of age leads us to a true recognition of our situation before God. God would have us know that we must live as men who manage our lives without him. The God who is with us is the God who forsakes us (Mark 15.34). The God who lets us live in the world without the working hypothesis of God is the God before whom we stand continually. Before God and with God we live without God. God lets himself be pushed out of the world on to the cross. He is weak and powerless in the world, and that is precisely the way, the only way, in which he is with us and helps us. Matt. 8.17 makes it quite clear that Christ helps us, not by virtue of his omnipotence, but by virtue of his weakness and suffering.⁹⁶

Here lays for Bonhoeffer a decisive difference between Christianity and all other religions in Europe. Our modern curiosity and “religiosity” makes us look in our distress to the *power* of God in the world, to the supremacy of man (e.g. charismatic politicians, religious leaders). God is the *deus ex machine*, so to speak. The Bible directs us, however, not to “power”—or to some “delusion” in the Dawkinsian sense—but to God’s *powerlessness* and suffering. Bonhoeffer argues that only the suffering God can help. He further concludes that “the development towards the world’s coming of age outlined above, which has done away with a false conception of God, opens up a way of seeing the God of the Bible, who wins power and space in the world by his weakness. This will probably be the starting-point for our ‘secular interpretation.’”⁹⁷

Opposing the extreme religious, political and secularist expressions in today’s Europe—i.e., twisted opinions, deformed ideological concepts and political programs which seriously injure human dignity—this paper advocates humanity’s relationship with transcendent reality as the motor between man and man,⁹⁸ as the constituent of society and history. Thus maintaining that “love,” the relationship between God and man, and its religious symbolization is the ground of order (*aition*, *aitia*) and has been fundamental to Western civilization.

Europe stands in a continuum of vital experience and articulate symbolization of the divine presence, stemming from philosophical Judaism, ancient philosophy and Christianity, and from the absorbed wisdom of Islamic civilization—specifically, Islamic contributions to Medieval Europe affected such varied areas as art, architecture, medicine, agriculture, music, language, education, law, and technology.⁹⁹ The sparkle of hope in our battle with secularism and blatant atheism are the aspirations and desires of those whose goal it is to represent the truth of the soul, the *imago Dei*, the

image of God. Voegelin writes: "Through spirit man actualizes his potential to partake of the divine. He rises thereby to the *imago Dei* which it is his destiny to be."¹⁰⁰

But, it will require all our efforts to kindle the glimmer of the *imago Dei* into a flame for a next generation. In addressing Europe's secularist and atheistic corruption it takes the true prophet's renewal and not the false prophet's graving for "Success" and "Power" to restore the forces of civilization. Buber clarifies the issue:

The true prophets know the little bloated idol which goes by the name of "Success" through and through. They know that ten successes that are nothing but successes can lead to defeat, while on the contrary ten failures can add to a victory, provided the spirit stands firm. When true prophets address the people, they are usually unsuccessful; everything in the people which craves for success opposes them. But the moment they are thrown into the pit, whatever spirit is still alive in Israel bursts into flame, and the turning begins in secret which, in the midst of the deepest distress, will lead to renewal. The false prophet feeds on dreams, and acts as if dreams were reality. The true prophet lives by the true word he hears, and must endure having it treated as though it only held true for some "ideological" sphere, "ethics" or "religion," but not for the real life of the people....¹⁰¹

The observations of Voegelin, Buber and Bonhoeffer made at the halfway point of the twentieth century are no less instructive for Europe and for the West today. The way in which our religious heritage is conceived and used will determine its worth as instrument of true spiritual freedom. The lesson for any of us is that misconstructions of reality and the creation of deformed ideologies can easily degenerate into manipulation and reckless majorities. Yet, the truth of divine-human experience is that man cannot be confined to world-immanent existence, to manmade religious and/or political systems. A Judeo-Christian ethics underscores this truth based on the positive understanding of man as a creature of God, who is "loved" and "free."

When life reaches out to an eternal world beyond the horizon, it is affecting our shared life in the secular sphere. To opt for transcendence in a European context means to literally surpass the boundaries of narrow political, secular and religious categories, and to go beyond the horizon of present knowledge by asking further questions. We only transcend our present mode of existence

through a new openness to the pull of the Beyond, to a relationship with God. Experiences of transcendence are spiritual experiences of reaching, of being drawn beyond one's present horizon of knowledge, of religious and ethical orientation towards the divine. Opting for meaning, for transcendence over the material plane does not necessarily mean something abstruse. In ordinary day-to-day experiences we confront our fears and ignorance, and allow ourselves to be moved in questioning by a genuine desire for love and truth, for relationship with the "Eternal Thou." The moment of surrender to the *imago Dei*, and God is back! Present and *Presence* on the horizon...

NOTES TO “NO GOD ON THE HORIZON?”

¹ “Radical atheism” is a term I would like to use here for a particular human experience that radically shuts out the existence of any deity; the deliberate choice by the individual human mind to allow for a “closure” and/or “revolt” towards the divine Presence, towards God. It is the rejection of religion in all forms, often based on what is seen as “scientific evidence,” in favor of atheism. Consequently, radical atheism is a current within twenty-first century thought that aims to challenge and to overthrow religion, by strongly opposing accepted religious dogmas and traditional faith in God. The term resembles “militant atheism” which designation is applied to atheists who are, or are perceived to be, hostile towards religion. The term “militant atheism” has been used since George William Foot, going back to at least 1894; it has been applied to thinkers from Thomas Hobbes onwards. The term had an explicit function within the materialism of Marxism and Leninism, and in the early years of the Soviet Union, and more recently it has been used, frequently depreciatively, to describe atheists such as Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, and Daniel Dennett. The definition of “radical atheism” is equivalent to that of “militant atheism.” It is an atheism which is vigorously antagonistic toward religion, which necessitates more than brawny divergence with religious faith—it requires something verging on “the revolt of man” and is characterized by a craving to wipe out God and all forms of religious belief from global consciousness. Radical atheists frequently tend to make strong and highly opinionated anti-religion claims that moderate atheists do not, specifically: (i) religion is demonstrably delusional, false or nonsense and (ii) religion is usually or always harmful. Conversely, in radical atheism consciousness is raised to the fact that to be an atheist is a realistic aspiration, and a brave and splendid one, whereas religious belief is delusional and a false aspiration. Scientific concepts and/or “proofs” such as the theory of evolution are used by radical atheists as argument to fight their cause that God does not exist. Religion and man’s experience of the divine are seen as a “God delusion,” “not great” but oppressive, because thinking, they believe, is anathema to religion. Adding “radical” in radical atheism (from Latin *radix* or “root”) is used for emphasis so one would not confuse it with (moderate) atheism or even with agnosticism and skepticism. The term radical as an adjective meaning is pertaining to the root or going to the root of the conviction that there is not a God, and no evidence to make such a claim. Additionally, radical atheists locate the root cause of human oppression in religion, as opposed to legal systems or class conflict. In particular, radical atheism has to do with an atheist’s degree of ideological fanaticism to assert God as “non-existent.” Moreover, it aspires for a radical change at the root: a call for a drastic (political) reordering of society, if not a revolutionary societal change, where the influence of religion is minimized or diminished and exchanged by an atheistic consciousness or pride.

² With the term “political fundamentalism,” I refer to an ideology which exploits religion and/or the fear of religion, and which makes use of any (anti-) religious sentiments in society for political purposes, that is to say solely as a means to further political influence and power. Political fundamentalists carry an “apocalyptic” type of agenda which at the same time is extraordinarily anti-spiritual and resentful—or what Voegelin calls “Gnostic.” A political fundamentalist may use religion as a means to undermine democracy in an attempt to

create and establish his/her own ideology, which often thrives on simplifications with a mentality of world-hatred and world-rejection—i.e., rejection of minority groups, other religions and so on—rather than reconciliation with nature and faith.

³ *Noein* is to think, to know, to cognize and apprehend by the mind, to see so as to remark or discern (distinguished from merely seeing). *Noesis*, the activity of nous in Voegelin's analysis, is the process by which *episteme* is developed as reflective understanding involving critical self-awareness on the part of the inquirer based on the understanding of the nature of inquiry as such. *Noesis* in this sense brings, not knowledge of a previously unknown reality, but differentiated insight into hitherto compactly experienced reality. Eric Voegelin, "Glossary of Terms Used in Eric Voegelin's Writings" in *Autobiographical Reflections*, ed. Ellis Sandoz, Vol. 34, The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2006), 169. The abbreviation for the Collected Works of Eric Voegelin hereafter is "CW, Vol."

⁴ With "honest reflection" I mean, in the Voegelin sense, authentic consideration of experience by way of mediating interpretive models. It contrasts with immediacy of experience. CW, 34:177.

⁵ For spiritual "discernment" in the Christian tradition see for instance "Rules for Discernment" in Michael Ivens, S.J., *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises: Text and Commentary, A handbook for Retreat Directors* (Gloucester: Action Publishing Technology Ltd, 1998), 205-237.

⁶ The modern equivalent to Cicero's *anxietas* is the German and Dutch word "angst" ("fear" or "anxiety"). It is commonly used in English to symbolize an intense feeling of emotional strife. A different but related meaning is for example attributed to Kierkegaard who uses the term "angst" (in Danish: "dread") to describe a profound and deep-seated spiritual condition of insecurity and despair in the free human being. To symbolize that experience he wrote books with titles like *Fear and Trembling* and *Sickness unto Death*. In them he analyzes the angst, the existential anxiety which accompanies human freedom. Besides Kierkegaard's "dread," for Voegelin, the Hobbesian "fear of death" and also Heidegger's *Angst* show how a shift has taken place from the classical experience of joyful participation in a theophany to the *agnoia ptoiodes*, a pathological phenomenon of "scare," to the hostile alienation from a reality perceived as hiding rather than revealing itself. CW, 12:277.

⁷ Many Catholics, particularly in Ireland (but also in Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Switzerland) suffered from the abuse scandals in the Catholic Church. The Ferns Inquiry (2005), The Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (CICA), commonly referred to as the Ryan report (2009), and the Report by Commission of Investigation into Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin, commonly referred to as the Murphy report (2009), are the result of the public inquiries conducted by Ireland into the sexual abuse scandals in the Catholic Church. Though "Ferns" and "Ryan" are different in status, at length and in great detail cases of emotional, physical and sexual abuse of hundreds of children over decades have been reported.

⁸ Stephen Castle, "EU celebrates 50th birthday-with a row about religion," *The Independent*, London, March 21, 2007.

⁹ Martin Buber, *A Land of Two Peoples: Martin Buber on Jews and Arabs*, ed. by Paul R. Mendes-Flohr (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 143.

¹⁰ See Henri Astier, "The deep roots of French secularism," *BBC News Online*, 2004.

¹¹ The proposal of “the Crucifix-ban” initially had the support of the Belgian parties Open VLD, PS, MR and Ecolo. They accounted for 35 votes, but it was not enough (3 votes short) to approve the proposal. <http://www.kerknieuws.nl> & <http://www.gva.be>

¹² In the Stoic psychopathology, *allotriosis* means a state of withdrawal from one’s own self as constituted by the tension toward the divine ground of existence. CW, 34:102.

¹³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, tr. Reinhard Krauss, Charles C. West and Douglas W. Stott, ed. Clifford J. Green, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 269.

¹⁴ CW, 34:179. CW, 17:256.

¹⁵ CW, 34:159.

¹⁶ Buber, *A Land of Two Peoples: Martin Buber on Jews and Arabs*, 143.

¹⁷ Geert Wilders’s Freedom party (PVV) in the Netherlands pleads for “ethnic registration.” <http://www.pvv.nl/index.php/visie/verkiezingsprogramma>, 11: “Etnische registratie van iedereen. Inclusief vermelding ‘Antilliaan.’” See also note 40.

¹⁸ For an analysis of *the Other*, see Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, tr. Alphonso Lingis, Duquesne Studies: Philosophical Series (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969); *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985); *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, tr. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1981); *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, tr. Seán Hand (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990); *Entre Nous: Thinking-of-the-Other*, trs. Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav, Continuum Impacts (New York: Continuum, 2006); *Time and the Other: And Other Essays*, tr. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2002).

¹⁹ Chap. 3, §5.3 in CW, 16:181.

²⁰ CW, 16:181.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1995), 189.

²³ In “Moslims, bevrijd uzelf en u kunt alles” (“Muslims, free yourself and you can do everything”), *NRC* (July 19, 2010) Wilders calls himself an agnostic.

²⁴ See Eric Voegelin, “The Jews as Counteridea,” in CW, 2:180-206.

²⁵ Based on the statistics of the CBS (*Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek*)—which is responsible for collecting and processing data in order to publish statistics to be used in practice, by policymakers and for scientific research—the number of Muslims in the Netherlands in early 2010 was estimated at 6% of the population. The CBS poll, “*Permanent Onderzoek Leefsituatie*,” asked people for their religious denomination, where “Islam” was a separate response option. The most recent figures are from 2006. Based on these figures the percentage of Muslim ethnic background was calculated. In 2006, CBS came out on 857000 Muslims. On the basis of population growth, the International department of FORUM, the largest non-governmental knowledge institute and centre of expertise in the field of integration in the Netherlands, estimated the number of Muslims now 40 000 people higher. In other words 907000 persons that is 6% of the Dutch population. Sources: CBS, Marieke van Herten en Ferdy Otten, “Bevolkingstrends 3e kwartaal 2007, ‘Naar een nieuwe schatting van het aantal

islamiëten in Nederland” (“Towards a new estimation of the number of Muslims in the Netherlands”). <http://www.forum.nl>

²⁶ Mohammed Bouyeri (b. Amsterdam, March 8, 1978)

²⁷ Geert Wilders in *HP/De Tijd* (February 6, 2004): “Mocht het ooit tot rassenrellen komen, wat ik dus echt niet wil, dan hoeft daarvan niet bij voorbaat een negatieve werking uit te gaan.” Geert Wilders in *HP/De Tijd*, (February 6, 2004).

²⁸ Ian Traynor, “‘I don’t hate Muslims. I hate Islam,’ says Holland’s rising political star: Geert Wilders, the popular MP whose film on Islam has fuelled the debate on race in Holland, wants an end to mosque building and Muslim immigration,” *The Guardian* (February 17, 2008).

²⁹ Bruno Waterfield, “Ban Koran like Mein Kampf, says Dutch MP,” *The Daily Telegraph* (August 9, 2007). Wilders in *De Volkskrant* on August 8, 2007: “In verschillende soera’s worden moslims opgeroepen joden, christenen, andersgelovigen en niet-gelovigen te onderdrukken, vervolgen of vermoorden, vrouwen te slaan en te verkrachten en met geweld een wereldwijde islamitische staat te vestigen. Soera’s te over die moslims oproepen en aanzetten tot dood en verderf.”

³⁰ Wilders in *De Volkskrant* on August 8, 2007: “Verbied dat ellendige boek zoals ook *Mein Kampf* verboden is!”

³¹ Anthony Browne, “Death threats force controversial Dutch MP underground,” *The Times* (November 20, 2004).

³² Wilders in *De Volkskrant* on August 8, 2007: “Ik heb genoeg van de islam in Nederland: geen moslimimmigrant er meer bij. Ik heb genoeg van de aanbidding van Allah en Mohammed in Nederland: geen moskee er meer bij. Ik heb genoeg van de Koran in Nederland: verbied dat fascistische boek. Genoeg is genoeg.”

³³ Term *metastasis* is introduced by Voegelin in *Israel and Revelation* (CW, 14:506), to signify “the change in the constitution of being envisaged by the [Israelite] prophets.”

³⁴ “Wilders wil ‘kopvoddentaks’” (“Wilders wants ‘head-rag-tax’”), *Trouw*, algemene beschouwingen (September 16, 2009).

³⁵ <http://www.pvv.nl/index.php/visie/verkiezingsprogramma>, 13

³⁶ Geert Wilders in the “Town council election’s Debate” (“*Debat gemeenteraadsverkiezingen*”), the Netherlands on Monday February 15, 2010. See also “Wilders heeft geen concrete plannen” (“Wilders has no concrete plans”), *AD* (February 15, 2010).

³⁷ “PVV: Leger inzetten tegen straatterror Gouda” (“PVV: Army deployment against streetterror Gouda”), *Elsevier* (September 15, 2008): “PVV-leider Geert Wilders wil dat het leger wordt ingezet om overlast door straattuig tegen te gaan. De PVV’er wil desnoods soldaten uit Uruzgan terughalen om bijvoorbeeld de toestanden in Gouda aan te pakken.”

³⁸ David Charter, “Anti-Islam MP Geert Wilders faces trial over controversial film,” *The Times* (January 22, 2009).

³⁹ <http://www.pvv.nl/index.php/visie/verkiezingsprogramma>, 5-7: “Eeuwen wapperde onze vlag over alle zeeën en was de driekleur het symbool van vrijheid. Van een volk dat zelf zijn eigen lot bepaalde. Maar dat is lang geleden [...] De Partij voor de Vrijheid ziet een land dat nu echt afscheid moet nemen van de vermolmd linkse idealen van vroeger. Al Gore is door de mand gevallen, het gehate multiculturele experiment heeft ons vooral nadelen opgeleverd en de islam brengt ons geen culturele verrijking maar sjaria-

fatalisme, jihadterrorisme en haat tegen homo's en Joden. Overal in Europa zien we dezelfde problemen met de islam [...] Wie denkt dat islamisering een kwestie is van one issue kan niet tellen. De massa-immigratie heeft enorme gevolgen voor alle facetten van onze samenleving. Het is economisch gezien een ramp, het tast de kwaliteit van ons onderwijs aan, vergroot de onveiligheid op straat, leidt tot een uittocht uit onze steden, verdrijft Joden en homo's en spoelt decennia vrouwenemancipatie door de wc. Om er even een sector uit te lichten: zelfs de zorg islamiseert in rap tempo. Moslimvrouwen die behandeling door mannelijke artsen weigeren, moslima's die niet door mannelijke broeders willen worden gewassen, islamitische ouderen die van de koks in hun verzorgingshuis halal voedsel eisen, medewerkers van de thuiszorg die een tolk moeten meenemen omdat de patiënt slechts het Turks of Arabisch beheerst. En wie, denkt u, betaalt die tolk? En waarom is die tolk eigenlijk nodig? Theo van Gogh zei het zo mooi over Job Cohen en zijn houding tegenover Marokkanen. Van Gogh schreef dat Cohen betoogde: "Jullie horen bij ons!", in plaats van te vragen: "Wat doen jullie eigenlijk hier?" Wij stellen die vraag wel. Wat doen ze hier eigenlijk? Wie heeft ze binnengelaten? De multiculturele nachtmerrie die ons wordt aangedaan kunnen we en willen we niet als een vaststaand feit aanvaarden. Het Nederlandse volk heeft niet om de massa-immigratie gevraagd en moet daar dan ook niet de prijs voor betalen. De schuld ligt niet bij Henk en Ingrid. De schuld ligt bij de linkse elites die denken dat de wereld er uit ziet als Woodstock. De keuze die 9 juni voor ons ligt is een simpele: nog verder de multiculturele afgrond in of herstel van onze traditionele normen en waarden. Kiezen voor veiligheid of kiezen voor nog meer criminaliteit. Kiezen voor de islam of kiezen voor Nederland. Kiezen voor onze vlag of voor de vlag van de multiculturele EU-heilstaat. Kiezen voor meer van hetzelfde of kiezen voor hoop en optimisme. Dit is een tijd om te kiezen. De PVV heeft gekozen. Dit zijn onze keuzes."

⁴⁰ <http://www.pvv.nl/index.php/visie/verkiezingsprogramma>, 11: "Etnische registratie van iedereen. Inclusief vermelding 'Antilliaan.'"

⁴¹ "Wilders wil 'kopvoddentaks'" ("Wilders wants 'head-rag-tax'"), *Trouw*, algemene beschouwingen (September 16, 2009).

⁴² Bruno Waterfield, "Ban Koran like Mein Kampf, says Dutch MP," *The Daily Telegraph* (August 9, 2007).

⁴³ *CW*, 34:179.

⁴⁴ *CW*, 33:341.

⁴⁵ <http://www.pvv.nl/index.php/visie/verkiezingsprogramma>, 6: "De PVV kiest voor rechten van vrouwen en homo's. De Partij voor de Vrijheid zet zich in voor de traditionele Joods-christelijke en humanistische waarden die van Nederland het succes hebben gemaakt dat het nu is."

⁴⁶ *CW*, 16:406.

⁴⁷ *CW*, 33: 224-234

⁴⁸ Cf. Meins G. S. Coetsier, *Etty Hillesum and the Flow of Presence: A Voegelinian Analysis*, Eric Voegelin Institute Series in Political Philosophy: Studies in Religion and Politics (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2008); "'You Consciousness' Towards political theory: Etty Hillesum's experience and symbolization of the divine presence," in *Spirituality in the Writings of Etty Hillesum: Proceedings of the Etty Hillesum Conference at Ghent University, November 2008 (Supplements to the Journal of Jewish Thought and Philoso-*

phy), eds. Klaas A.D. Smelik, Ria van den Brandt, and Meins G.S. Coetsier (Boston: Brill, 2010).

⁴⁹ “De ene keer is het een Hitler en de andere keer voor mijn part Iwan de Verschrikkelijke, en de ene eeuw is het de inquisitie en een andere keer oorlogen, of de pest en aardbevingen en hongersnood. Het gaat er in laatste instantie om, hoe men het lijden, dat toch essentieel aan dit leven is draagt en verdraagt en verwerkt en dat men een stukje van z’n ziel ongeschonden bewaren kan door alles heen.” Etty Hillesum, *Etty: De nagelaten geschriften van Etty Hillesum 1941-1943*, introductie door Gideon Lodders and Rob Tempelaars, onder redactie van Klaas A. D. Smelik (Amsterdam: Balans, 2008 (5th ed.)), 510. English translation: Etty Hillesum, *Etty: The Letters and Diaries of Etty Hillesum, 1941-1943*, ed. Klaas A. D Smelik, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans (Grand Rapids, Mich. & Ottawa, Ont.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. & Novalis, St. Paul University, 2002), 483.

⁵⁰ In Aristotle it means “common man” (Cf. *CW*, 16, chap. 9, §4). In more general Greek use, it simply means an individual. *CW*, 34:163.

⁵¹ Logos is a central feature of *theoria* or *episteme*. *CW*, 34:166.

⁵² Cf. Meins G. S. Coetsier, “Between Realities: Dawkins vs. Voegelin,” in *Modern Age, A Quarterly Review*, Vol. 51, No. 3 & 4 (Summer/Fall 2009): 220-230 [Special Double Issue].

⁵³ *Via dolorosa* is the path of sorrow; the route of Jesus bearing his cross.

⁵⁴ *CW*, 34:123.

⁵⁵ *CW*, 34:162.

⁵⁶ Term coined by Bernard Lonergan and used by Voegelin to refer to the general attitude of seeking “eclipse of reality.” *CW*, 34:179.

⁵⁷ *CW*, 34:156. *Doxa* or *doxai* is a term for “opinion” or “judgment.” In Greek philosophy it normally symbolised an inferior grade of knowledge as compared with *episteme*. In Parmenides, this experience of *doxai* is the realm of particular phenomena as compared with the experience of true being, which he affirms with the ‘Is!’ In Plato, the experience of *doxai* is rather the knowledge of the sensory world as compared with knowledge of ideas. What Plato would have called *doxa* is now sometimes erroneously referred to as “ideology.” Voegelin uses *doxai* particularly to refer to externalising conceptions. “Doxic thinking,” for Voegelin, is thinking that tends to focus on a *doxa* and to confuse the limitations of this model with the reality it symbolically represents. In the Platonic dialogues *doxai* refer to false opinions advanced with social authority, which serve to rationalise irresponsible unbalanced actions that indulge disordered passions.

⁵⁸ Voegelin discusses *homonoia* in *The Ecumenic Age*. *CW*, 17:212.

⁵⁹ *CW*, 17:393.

⁶⁰ “Existential consciousness,” is closely related to “reflective distance,” “balance of consciousness” and “Truth of existence.” *CW*, 34:159.

⁶¹ Martin Buber, *Gottesfinsternis. Betrachtungen zur Beziehung zwischen Religion und Philosophie* (Zürich: Manesse Verlag, 1953); *Eclipse of God: Studies in the Relation between Religion and Philosophy* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1988). Eric Voegelin, “The Eclipse of Reality,” in *CW*, 28:111-162.

⁶² Cf. *Anamnesis*, *CW*, 6:352-353.

⁶³ Voegelin sometimes describes “the ground” as “non-existent reality,” reserving the term “existence” for spatio-temporally conditioned phenomena. *CW*,

34:177. See also Glenn Hughes, *Mystery and Myth in the Philosophy of Eric Voegelin* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993), 48-49.

⁶⁴ Cf. "Reason: The Classic Experience," in *CW*, 12:265-291.

⁶⁵ *CW*, 34:176.

⁶⁶ *CW*, 34:177.

⁶⁷ *CW*, 12:269. Cf. ten meanings of reason, *CW*, 28:88.

⁶⁸ *CW*, 34:155

⁶⁹ *Openness* and attunement to the divine, however perceived, is the condition of existence in truth, or "order," in that social form; *closure* to the divine, aversion from it, rebellion against it, is existence in untruth, "disorder" in Voegelin's sense.

⁷⁰ *Amathia* is used by Voegelin in terms of ignorance, folly, rudeness, boorishness. Plato used it in the *Laws* to refer to voluntary ignorance motivated by aversion to truth (consequently a stronger term than "folly" in English), an unwillingness to be drawn into the consideration of the transcendent.

⁷¹ Eric Voegelin, "Why Philosophize? To Recapture Reality!," in *CW*, 34:118-126.

⁷² *CW*, 34:118.

⁷³ *CW*, 34:119.

⁷⁴ Voegelin gives examples such as Solzhenitsyn, Plato, Orwell, Camus and Mann. The main sources for him, however, were Classic, Patristic and Scholastic philosophy, as well as the works of contemporary representatives such as Etienne Gilson and Henri de Lubac. Other areas were the history of the ancient Near East and (early) comparative religion. Voegelin studied early symbolisms, extending back to the Paleolithicum. *CW*, 34:120.

⁷⁵ Considerable help in understanding the processes of deformation has come to me from the observation of these processes by the great Austrian novelists, especially Albert Paris Gütersloh, Robert Musil, and Heimito von Doderer. They coined the term *second reality* in order to signify the image of reality created by human beings when they exist in a state of alienation. The principal characteristic of this state of alienation, which is supported by the imaginative construction of second realities in opposition to the reality of experience, is what Doderer has called the "refusal to apperceive" (*Apperzeptionsverweigerung*). The concept appears in his novel *Die Dämonen*, and I always enjoy the fact that he developed it while discussing certain sexual aberrations. The concept of *Apperzeptionsverweigerung* is formally developed in the introductory remarks to the chapter on "Die dicken Damen"—fat ladies—who are preferred by one of his heroes. The refusal to apperceive has become for me the central concept for the understanding of ideological aberrations and deformations. *CW*, 34:122.

⁷⁶ *CW*, 34:121.

⁷⁷ *CW*, 34:120.

⁷⁸ *CW*, 34:118-119.

⁷⁹ *CW*, 34:121-122.

⁸⁰ *CW*, 34:126.

⁸¹ *CW*, 34:119.

⁸² Aquinas's used the term *fides informis* for a proper but rudimentary orientation toward God through doctrine; a lower level of faith than *fides formata*. *CW*, 34:160.

⁸³ *CW*, 34:160. *CW*, 19:35-36.

⁸⁴ Buber, *Eclipse of God: Studies in the Relation between Religion and Philosophy*, 125.

⁸⁵ Cf. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, tr. Reinhard Krauss, Charles C. West & Douglas W. Stott, ed. Clifford J. Green, Vol. 6, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005).

⁸⁶ Martin Buber, *Ich und Du*, ed. Bernhard Casper (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1995); *I and Thou*, tr. Walter Arnold Kaufmann (New York: Touchstone, 1996); *The Letters of Martin Buber: A Life of Dialogue*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer & Paul R. Mendes-Flohr, tr. Clara Winston & Harry Zohn Richard Winston (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996); *Between Man and Man*, tr. Ronald Gregor Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 2002); *Martin Buber on Psychology and Psychotherapy: Essays, Letters and Dialogue*, ed. Judith Buber Agassi (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1999); Martin Buber & Julia Neuberger, *The Way of Man: According to the Teaching of Hasidim*, Routledge Classics (London and New York: Routledge, 2002); Martin Buber, *Das dialogische Prinzip: Ich und Du; Zwiesprache; Die Frage an den Einzelnen; Elemente des Zwischen-menschlichen* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2006).

⁸⁷ Martin Buber, *Eclipse of God: Studies in the Relation between Religion and Philosophy*, x.

⁸⁸ *Summum bonum* is the equivalent Latin term for the *agathon* in Plato, Blessedness or Beatitude in Christianity; the “divine measure,” or “transcendent perfection.” *CW*, 34:180.

⁸⁹ *Epistrophe* is equivalent to the Latin *conversio* or the German *Hinwendung*. See also *periagoge*. *CW*, 34:158.

⁹⁰ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 43-78.

⁹¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 188.

⁹² Martin Buber, *Ich und Du*, ed. Bernhard Casper (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1995), 71. “Die verlängerten Linien der Beziehungen schneiden sich im ewigen Du. Jedes geeinzelte Du ist ein Durchblick zu ihm. Durch jedes geeinzelte Du spricht das Grundwort das ewige an.”

⁹³ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, tr. Ronald Gregor Smith (London: T&T Clark, 1958), 25.

⁹⁴ *CW*, 34:174. For Aristotle’s meaning of *phronesis* as one of the “existential virtues,” see Voegelin, *Anamnesis* in *CW*, 6:153-56.

⁹⁵ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters & Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethge (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster), 1997, 360.

⁹⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters & Papers from Prison*, 360-61.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 361.

⁹⁸ Cf. Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man*, tr. Ronald Gregor Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

⁹⁹ From the 11th to the 13th century, Europe absorbed knowledge from the Islamic civilization. The rediscovery, for instance, of the ancient classic texts, most notably the work of Aristotle (later followed by Thomas Aquinas) was through retranslations from Arabic. The influence of the Muslim civilization as a whole on medieval Europe was significant—e.g., in such fields as science, philosophy, theology, literature and aesthetics. The contributions from the Islamic world have had a considerable effect on the development of Western civilization and contributed to the achievements of the Renaissance.

¹⁰⁰ *CW*, 34:163. *CW*, 12:7.

¹⁰¹ Buber, *A Land of Two Peoples: Martin Buber on Jews and Arabs*, 144.